

DR. RICK HALPERIN

Director, SMU Human Rights Education Program

My entire life of 58 years has been spent defending and advocating the idea that there is no such thing as a lesser person, and that all persons, regardless of whatever they have done, still have and remain worthy of their inherent dignity and must not, for any reason, be tortured or be put to death.

I was exposed to the realities of segregation at an early age and I saw firsthand the terrible consequences of its legacy. As a high school student in 1966, I spent three months in Santiago, Chile where I witnessed abject poverty, human misery and violent political upheaval. I was fortunate to spend my sophomore year (1968-1969) in college at the Sorbonne in Paris, France. On January 16, 1969, I was an eyewitness to the self-immolation of the Czech medical student, Jan Palach in Prague, Czechoslovakia. A few weeks later while traveling through London, England, I heard about Amnesty International. I joined AIUSA in 1971 when they opened an office in Washington, D.C.

Since 1972, I have been actively involved in the effort and struggle to abolish the death penalty in the United States. I work with many anti-death penalty (abolitionist) organizations, capital defense attorneys, representatives of various communities of faith, newspaper editorial boards, victims' rights groups, members of the families of the condemned, and many death row inmates throughout the country. I regularly visit the condemned and have been on international missions to monitor the facilities in which they are incarcerated. In 1998, I witnessed an execution in the death chamber in Huntsville, Texas. I now convey that experience both in my classroom and to human rights audiences, which I regularly address. My passion for activism has led me to participate in numerous non-violent civil disobedience demonstrations, some of which have resulted in my being arrested and jailed.

In addition to my work against the death penalty, I am also active in other areas of human rights. I work with a variety of organizations which seek improvements in human rights on behalf of women, children, gays and lesbians, indigenous persons, survivors of torture, imprisoned political prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders, journalists, and healthcare professionals who are under non-stop assault by governments around the world.

It became my singular pursuit to become very active in the global human rights movement and community and to pursue my career as a human rights educator. Since 1985, I have been actively working in the field of human rights education. I have helped to develop appropriate curricula and programs which foster the spread of human rights at all levels of higher learning. As a member of the history department and Director of the Human Rights Education Program at Southern Methodist University, I have been able to offer graduate and undergraduate courses in human rights. Many of my students are preparing for law school and are just now coming to grapple with ideas of law, human rights, justice, responsibility, victims and perpetrators, and, impunity and reconciliation.

My students also involve themselves in working directly with these issues, volunteering to work throughout the semester with capital defense attorneys, refugee and asylum-oriented organizations and attorneys, and the Dallas Center for Survivors of Torture.

As a past chairperson of the Board of Directors of Amnesty International USA and the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, I still travel widely and speak and monitor a variety of human rights concerns around the world. I welcome the opportunity to work with my peers in furtherance of this cause and its ideals - namely, to help bring about a world without torture, without suffering, without executions and without victims.

EDUCATION

- Ph.D., 1978 Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama
Southern U.S. History
- M.A., 1974 Southern Methodist University,
Department of History
- B.A., 1971 George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
- Summer 1966: exchange student in Santiago, Chile.
3 members of my host family were subsequently killed by Augusto Pinochet's security forces.

1968-1969: Paris, The Sorbonne.
Was an eyewitness in Jan. 1969, in Prague, Czechoslovakia to the self-immolation martyrdom of Jan Palach.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1985-present Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas
America's Dilemma: The Struggle for Human Rights
America And the Age of Genocide
America Enraged: From Brown to Watergate:
1954-1974 The American Civil War and Reconstruction

In addition to my classes, each year I take groups of students, faculty, staff and interested (non-university) individuals to a variety of locations, all related to human rights. In March 2004 and February 2008, I led groups to Vietnam and Cambodia. In August 2006, I led a group to Rwanda. In August 2007, I led a group to South Africa. In August 2008 I led a group to Argentina. Every December I lead a group to the death camp sites in Poland on an 11-day journey.

1983-1985 Auburn University
History Department
1980-1982 University of Mississippi
Center for Southern Studies
History Department
1979-1981 Tulane University
History Department

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

1971-present Amnesty International USA Chair, Board of Directors: 1992-1993; 2005-2007 Member, Board of Directors: 2004 -present, and 1989-1995 (elected to 3 consecutive terms); Member, National Death Penalty Advisory Committee: 2000-2003 Member, Local Group 205 in Dallas since 1985
2007-present Journey of Hope Member of Board of Directors
2001-2003 Human Rights Initiative Member, Board of Directors: 2001-2003
2001-2003 Capital Punishment Investigation and Education Services
Member, Board of Directors: 2001-2002
1985-present National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP)
Member, Board of Directors 2001-2002
Member, Executive Committee, 1988-1992
1996-present Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP)
President: 2000 - 2006; 2007-Member, Board of Directors: 1998 -present
1996-present Center for Survivors of Torture, Dallas, Texas Member, Advisory Task Force; member, Board of Directors
1996-present Jefferson-Titus Refugee Foundation, Arlington, Texas Member, Board of Directors
2003-present International Rescue Committee, Dallas Member, Advisory Council
1990-present Texans Against State Killing (TASK)
1993-present Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation (MVFR)
1994-present Abolitionist Action Committee (AAC)
1997-present Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (CUADP)

RECENT GRASS ROOTS ACTIVISM

1990 Participant, National Pilgrimage for Abolition of the Death Penalty
1991 Participant, Texas March for Abolition
1992-present Organize and participate in monthly anti-death penalty protests in downtown Dallas
1993 Participant, Journey of Hope March, Indiana
1994-present Founder and participant in an annual 4-day hunger fast and vigil on the steps of the US Supreme Court to commemorate the 1972 suspension and the 1976 re-legalization of capital punishment in America
1997-present Administrator of Death Penalty News and Updates webpage (see: <http://people.smu.edu/rhalperi/>); (This site is used as an information source by representatives of the media, and both the US Departments of State and Justice.)
1997 Organized and participated in the largest nonviolent civil disobedience action against the death penalty at the US Supreme Court

- 1998 Organized a nation-wide civil disobedience and protest in recognition of the 500th execution in the USA--vigils and protests were held in 28 states and 17 countries around the world
- 2002 Organized a non-violent civil disobedience action against the death penalty at the US Supreme Court

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING

- 2001 Participated in Amnesty International delegation and inspected conditions on Terrell Unit--death row, Livingston, Texas; provided input for AI report
- 1998 Eyewitness to lethal injection execution in the death chamber in Huntsville, Texas
- 1998 Participated in U.N. Human Rights delegation and inspected prison conditions in Dublin, Ireland and Belfast, Northern Ireland; basis for report issued by Irish Prison Commission (IPC).
- 1997 Participated in Amnesty International delegation and monitored conditions in Ellis I--death row, Huntsville, Texas; provided input for AI report
- 1994 Participated in Amnesty International delegation and inspected H-Unit, Death row facility, MacAlester, Oklahoma; provided input for AI report
- 1993 Visited Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza Strip and West Bank; met with members of Palestinian and Israeli Human Rights committees
- 1988 Participated in human rights delegation in San Salvador, El Salvador; inspected 2 morgues and viewed remains of victims of El Salvadoran death squads

RECENT HUMAN RIGHTS ADDRESSES/PRESENTATIONS

- 2008 Traveled to Buenos Aires to meet with various human rights groups
- 2007 Traveled to Paris for World Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty; traveled to The Netherlands to meet with human rights groups; traveled to South Africa to meet with various human rights groups
- 2006 Traveled to England and Germany to meet with members of parliament and human rights organizations concerning America's human rights record and the death penalty in the USA; traveled to Rwanda to meet with various human rights groups
- 2005 Traveled to Switzerland and to England to meet with members of parliament and human rights activists concerning America's human rights record and the death penalty in the USA
- 2004 Traveled to Germany (Eppenheim) to attend German AGM and traveled to various German cities and to Paris to meet with human right groups; traveled to Vietnam and Cambodia to meet with various human rights groups
- 2003 Traveled to Norway, Sweden and Finland to meet with members of parliaments concerning US death penalty issues
- 2002 Traveled to Germany (Nuremberg, Munich) to meet with human rights activists concerning US death penalty issues
- 2001 Traveled throughout Italy meeting with Italian human rights activists and members of the Italian government on US death penalty issues
- 2000 Addressed International Bannister Foundation, in Denmark; met with human rights activists in Gotheborg, Sweden; traveled throughout Switzerland and Austria meeting with human rights activists concerning US death penalty issues; panel member and presenter at an international death penalty conference, Palermo, Sicily.
- 1999 Addressed Lifelines' annual meeting, in England; traveled throughout Italy meeting with Italian human rights activists and members of Italian government on US death penalty issues
- 1998 Traveled throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland meeting with human rights activists about US death penalty issues; met with Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, concerning human rights violations in USA
- 1997 Met with human rights activists in Dublin, Ireland concerning US death penalty issues
- 1995 Met with human rights communities in Belgium and Switzerland concerning US death penalty issues
- 1994 Met with members of the French government and addressed European Parliament about and against the death penalty in the US
- 1993 Addressed Australian Parliament addressed human rights communities in England, Germany, Italy the Netherlands, Switzerland and Israel about the US death penalty
- 1992 Addressed human rights communities in Norway, Sweden and Finland with emphasis on US death penalty

NATIONAL and HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- 2008 2008 AGLSP National Faculty Award (National Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs)
- 2008 Humanitarian Service Award, The Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities of Dallas-Fort Worth
- 2006 Dallas Community TV Freedom of Speech Award

2003 National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty Lifetime Abolition Achievement Award
2000 Frederick Douglass Abolitionist Award, Amnesty International
1997 National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty Community Grassroots Activism Award
1996 Dallas Peacemaker of the Year (awarded by Dallas Peace and Justice Center)

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

2008 President's (U.S.) Volunteer Service Award (National program recognizing Americans who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to volunteer service)
2008 HOPE Professor Award
2006 HOPE Professor Award
2005-2006 Outstanding Faculty Teacher Award
2003 HOPE Professor Award
2002 HOPE Professor Award (Honoring Our Professor's Excellence)
2002 SMU Robert O. Cooper Fellowship in Peace and Justice
2001-2002 Outstanding Faculty Teacher Award
1994-1995 "M" Mustang Award for outstanding service to the University (SMU's top award)
1993-1994 Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award
1987-1988 Willis Tate Award for Outstanding Faculty Contributions for service to the student body